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Wednesday 2 November 2016

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 2 novembre 2016

Standing Committee on General Government

Election Finances Statute Law
Amendment Act, 2016

Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Loi de 2016 modifiant des lois
en ce qui concerne
le financement électoral



Chair: Grant Crack
Clerk: Sylwia Przedziecki

Président : Grant Crack
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL GOVERNMENTCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
AFFAIRES GOUVERNEMENTALES

Wednesday 2 November 2016

Mercredi 2 novembre 2016

*The committee met at 1602 in committee room 2.*ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters / *Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui a trait à des questions concernant les élections.*

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Good afternoon. We're going to call to order the Standing Committee on General Government. We have two deputants today.

GREEN PARTY OF ONTARIO

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The first deputant is Michael Schreiner, leader of the Green Party of Ontario. Michael, welcome.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Michael, you have 10 minutes for a presentation.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Hopefully I won't take the full 10 minutes, but we'll see.

You've all heard from me before. Before I start my comments, I'd really like to thank the committee for all the hard work you've put into this effort. I know you've travelled around the province listening to Ontarians, and I just want to thank you for that work.

I don't want to rehash the detailed comments I've provided before, both written and oral, but I think what prompted me to return to the committee was the proposals over the summer around banning all fundraising events for all candidates, MPPs, leadership contests etc., and then just my quick review of those proposed amendments that I received last week. It prompted me to want to make three points specific to how I think we can best address the issue of cash-for-access. Those three points are: lower donation limits—lower donation limits and lower donation limits, and, by the way, lower spending limits, while you're at it.

The real issue here is lowering donation limits. Even though we've made progress on lowering donation limits, the fact that a person can still donate \$3,600 to a party

and a candidate and a constituency association—I think it's too high. It opens all of us up to potential cash-for-access accusations or perception of accusations. I want to make three points around why I think donation limits need to be lowered.

The first is, I think \$3,600 is more than what most Ontarians can afford to donate to a political party. I know our Chief Electoral Officer, in his previous testimony to this committee, has indicated that by far the vast majority of donations to political parties are under \$1,000. That's what's affordable for most people in Ontario. I just want to point out that since the very beginning of this process, since before this was even a big issue, since my first meeting with the Premier on this issue, since my first meeting with both opposition leaders on this issue and since my testimony to this committee, I've always said that I felt that the donation limit should be under \$1,000. So my specific recommendation around that is that the donation limit should be \$300. Then if you donate \$300 to a party and a constituency association and a candidate, that would total \$900 and it would be below \$1,000. I think that would solve a lot of the problems that this complicated system that's been proposed is trying to address.

Which brings me to my second point. I think the government, with all due respect, is confusing cash-for-access with cash-for-access events. We need to distinguish between cash-for-access and events. Cash-for-access events are disturbing and obviously led to this scandal exploding, but what's the difference—and I'll just use myself as an example—between me as the leader of the Green Party of Ontario hosting a cash-for-access event for \$1,200, and phoning you up and asking for \$1,200? That might actually even be the ultimate cash-for-access event because it's a one-on-one conversation, and who knows what's happening in that conversation? So we can really eliminate that, if it's \$300. I think it's actually good for politicians to ask people for money, so I'm not suggesting that I shouldn't or you shouldn't ask people for money, but \$300 is a more reasonable limit.

The third point I want to make is this: The limits are really designed after the federal system. We've seen in the last week that a \$1,500 federal donation limit doesn't solve the problem either, because we're now having controversies around cash-for-access events at the federal level. So I don't think modelling our donation limits on the federal model is the best way to go. Again, I think \$300 would solve that.

The final point I want to make is around reducing the pressure for political parties to raise money. I know some of us were on Steve Paikin's show a little while ago and we were asked over and over again, "How much money does a political party need to run an election campaign?" "These things are expensive," etc., etc. I believe that Quebec has shown how much it takes political parties to run campaigns. If we went with the same spending limits as Quebec, which is 68 cents per elector, instead of Ontario's limits, which is 80 cents per elector, that would on average take about \$1 million out of the system in terms of what parties can spend. That would reduce the amount of pressure for parties to fundraise. I also think it's important—and again, our Chief Electoral Officer brought this out—that included in that limit should be all expenses, including expenses for travel, polling and research.

At this point, I would just open this up to questions. But, at the end of the day, remember that the primary reason we are here is to get big money out of politics. If we want to get big money out of politics, we have to lower donation limits. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you, Mr. Schreiner. Now we have three minutes for each party for questions or comments.

Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Mike, for being here once again. I'm glad that you kept your presentation to the main elements that you see, and it is cash-for-access.

I'm glad you made the distinction between events and cash-for-access. What I see happening here is no elimination of or no restriction, really, on cash-for-access. It's being hidden in a different fashion, it's being covered in a different fashion but it's not ending cash-for-access.

I often use the federal model as something that we should look up to provincially, and then we see all this stuff lately with Bill Morneau, the finance minister, and whatnot, where the system can be abused. I think it was John Gerretsen, the Attorney General, who said regardless of what bill, what legislation, what amendments we come up with, as soon as it's done, the parties will be having people going through there and finding how to continue to do what they want to do.

1610

I enjoyed your presentation. I think there's merit in what you've said about lowering the donations. If we can't improve the standards that we work within—and that's ourselves; we have to lift up our own standards and not abuse the legislation—if we can't do that, then the only other real mechanism is to lower the limits, in my view.

But on these fundraising events themselves and the way they're written, how is that going to impact you in the Green Party?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Great. First of all, anything that applies to all of you I believe should apply to me. I don't think that I should get any special status because I don't have a seat in the Legislature, so I agree with—

Mr. Randy Hillier: But is it going to make it harder and more difficult for the Green Party to move its—

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Most of our average donations are well under \$100, so—

Mr. Randy Hillier: No, I mean the events.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I don't think the events are necessarily going to hurt us. We have an event coming up; I'll be very transparent. It's \$100 a ticket. I don't think deep-pocketed donors are going to come. It's going to have great local food and local wine and local beverages. You're all welcome to come out to it if you'd like, for \$100 is all. Those types of events—it will affect us. Obviously, for an event like that, we would only be able to do break-even, moving forward under the current rules. I can actually live with that. What I can't live with is the fact that I don't think that is going to solve the problem. The problem is cash-for-access, and I believe the only way you're going to solve that problem is to lower donation limits. That's just why I want to keep emphasizing over and over again that that's the real solution.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you, Mr. Schreiner. Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for coming in, Mr. Schreiner. It's important that we have your perspective on the two amendments. You know that the way Bill 201 and then Bill 2 were crafted, they intentionally left out these two amendments. What I said to the electoral officer on Monday was that I don't think any of us expected to be here discussing these particular two amendments.

The per-vote subsidy had been discussed, but not the model that has been proposed in the second amendment. And then the issue of banning MPPs from all fundraisers I think could probably be challenged constitutionally going forward, because people do have the right to assemble. It's very challenging for a piece of legislation to dictate where people can meet and under what circumstances they can meet. The amount of money that they can meet for is part of that as well.

The electoral officer—and I don't know if you had a chance to read his deputation, but he said that he was not consulted. He could not give any feedback on these proposed amendments because there is no precedent for them. He was also not even able to give us any feedback in a timely manner because we're going to be doing clause-by-clause. I mean, it's very quick.

Do you feel that the public, the citizens of this province, have a sense that we are moving to a publicly funded election finance model, and do you feel that there has been sufficient information out there on this substantive change to our province?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: In terms of the movement to more public funding, I think it's a good thing. I've supported it from day one. I think vote-to-play is the better way to go over pay-to-play, which is what we currently have, and—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, but I'm not asking you—I'm asking what the people want.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: —I think people support that. I think people are aware of that. That being said, I think people have concerns about these particular amendments, the reason being that political parties host events that, in some respects, are not motivated by raising money. We do barbecues, for instance, that are really more about building community and thanking the community and engaging people in discussion. If you do it on a cost-recovery basis, I realize that's acceptable in the way the amendments are proposed. My concern is, what if I charge you \$20 to come out to my barbecue and you eat \$10 worth of food? Do I refund the \$10? If you eat \$20 worth of food, then am I okay with that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, it goes to the Chief Electoral Officer based on this.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, it does, but I'm a bit confused around how you calculate all of that. It adds levels of complication, but I don't know if it's necessary. If we would just lower the donation limits, and just make it all easier on all of us, make it less complicated for all of us—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, the Chief Electoral Officer also shared your concerns. He even warned us in his deputation that political parties should not go looking to loopholes or interpretive exceptions to these new rules, because in many respects you can drive a truck through some of these. I mean, he has no idea how he as the Chief Electoral Officer is going to monitor and provide oversight with these changes, because no other independent officer who has this responsibility can tell him how it's going to work, because it's never been done.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: That's my concern. Do I need to provide detailed receipts for how much everything for the barbecue costs and compare that—it just seems complicated.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you so much. We'll move to the government side. Mr. Baker?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Mike, for coming in. I have a few questions for you.

The government has put forward an amendment that would create a riding constituency association subsidy of \$25,000 per riding, which would be divided based on the share of votes that association's candidate received in the prior election.

By my calculation, if you received approximately 20% of the vote—I think you're more or less in that category—that would provide your association with about \$5,000 each year. What are your thoughts on this amendment?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I think it was actually a good amendment to include constituency associations in the public funding allowance. Actually, I'll compliment Mr. Hillier over there, because I know he raised that when I gave my presentation previously. I think it was a good move to include constituency associations as well as central parties, because I think there is a general concern among the public that party leaders and central party leader offices have too much power. Including riding associations, I think, was a good step.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Okay. The bill contains a proposal to offer a per-vote allowance to registered political parties. The amount is \$2.71 per vote.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Right.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Are you supportive of this move?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Absolutely, I've been very supportive of it from day one. One of the concerns that someone has expressed to me when I have talked about lowering donation limits was that if you lower donation limits, would that increase the per-vote allowance even more? Because the last time, when the original Bill 201 was amended to lower donation limits from over \$7,000 down to \$3,000-plus, the per-vote allowance went up.

I want to just add why I think spending limits should go down as well is that I don't think we need to increase the per-vote allowance. I think it's fine where it's at. But I do think we need to lower donation limits. If we can come up with a formula that allows us to lower donation limits and maintain the existing provisions for the per-vote allowance, both for the central party and the riding associations, I think it would be a positive step forward.

Mr. Yvan Baker: How much time do I have left, Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): About 30 seconds.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Going back to the issue of the proposal to ban MPPs, candidates and others from attending political fundraising events, I know you've talked about the idea of the difference between an event and an individual meeting.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Right.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Taking the individual meetings out of it for a moment, though, if I may, do you think it's a good idea to do this?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I think it's a better idea to lower donation limits. To me, that is the best idea you can put forward. Get donation limits lower.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Okay, but is this the next-best idea? *Laughter.*

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's better than our current system. I'll put it that way.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you so much, Mr. Schreiner, for being here today.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you.

MR. NELSON WISEMAN

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The next deputant is Mr. Nelson Wiseman, director, Canadian studies program; and professor, department of political science, University of Toronto. Welcome, Mr. Wiseman. You have up to 10 minutes to do your presentation, and then each party has up to three minutes to ask questions or make comments. Identify yourself for Hansard before you start, and carry on.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: My name is Nelson Wiseman. I teach at the University of Toronto.

I come to this meeting with mixed feelings. I'm coming because I was invited to do so yesterday by a

legislative assistant to one of the members on the committee. I think I got the email after 4:30 in the afternoon, so here I am with approximately 24 hours' notice.

1620

I do a number of other things, but I did present—and I couldn't meet with you that day; you were in London—my earlier thoughts back on July 27. I just had an opportunity to quickly look at what I said then.

You guys are the experts in politics. I noticed Michael talked about getting notice of the amendments last week. All I know is what I read in the media. I'm not as involved as you are directly and I'm not on a committee, but it's always interesting for me to view how a committee operates.

The reason I'm appearing is I work in a public institution and I'm a political scientist. You guys pay for me, so if somebody thinks I can contribute to public affairs, I feel obliged to come and get out of the ivory tower.

The thing that strikes me, and this is just from reading media reports over this whole issue—and again, I compliment the media for exposing it a number of months ago—is that the government appears to have tied itself in knots in formulating the bill originally, and now in amending it. Indeed, I thought it was rather farcical, this whole idea of barring politicians from personally attending fundraising events. It just seems crazy and out of place to me. I don't know where in the world this is done. Actually, when I saw it, I found it laughable on its face. I thought it made the government really look as if it's overreaching.

I think transparency is the key when it comes to fundraisers. The problem is when you have only a select group of people who are invited and the affair goes unpublicized. That was the issue with the Morneau case. I mean, had that been in the media, then we would know.

The problem could also be that you could have a fundraiser, and if it's to a select group—it's just 10 people from one company or 15 people from one industry group—that's undue influence.

But the big thing is having this out in the open. I noticed cabinet ministers, at least federally—you see their agenda every day. It's published. You know what they're doing. Who knew that Bill Morneau was going to be meeting these 15 people, or whatever it was, at somebody's house on such and such a date?

I believe much of the money spent in election campaigns is unnecessary and has relatively little effect. I gave many examples in July. Another example that just struck me following the news today is I heard in the media that Donald Trump hasn't spent a cent campaigning in Arizona. The Democrats have spent a lot. In fact, they even flew Michelle Obama out there last week. Yet the poll comes out today indicating that Trump is going to win Arizona easily. He's ahead by 5% and I suspect he may win by more. So that's the main take-away I take from money and politics.

Many voters form their judgments based on media reporting, which they perceive as much more neutral than

the material—or may I say propaganda—that's produced by the parties; so much money is spent on negative advertising, it actually has the effect of lowering the level of debate and of making people more cynical about politics and politicians. We live in an age of ubiquitous social media, so the paid advertising by parties is of decreasing importance by parties and candidates. This is what we've noticed in the American primaries and also now in the general election there.

The most important communicator, still, is the mainstream media. Social media has an impact when the mainstream media picks it up.

Moreover, many voters in many ridings opt for the same party in every election no matter what the issues of the day are or who the candidate is. I would suggest that's why a 19-year-old first-year university student is going to win the coming by-election in Niagara, and a Liberal candidate, whoever that Liberal candidate may be—and I see there are 10 people running for the nomination—is going to win the by-election in the Ottawa region. Money is going to be incidental; it will be irrelevant to the outcomes in those races.

I think too much money is currently spent and wasted in election campaigns. Putting limits on spending is more effective—and limits, of course, on contributions. Nevertheless, limits on contributions are in order because they do contribute to deflating the idea that parties and candidates can easily be bought.

Yesterday, I got a little blurb on what the amendments were, so let me just respond to each point.

Expanding the list of regulated participants in the electoral process to cover people who are seeking nominations as a candidate: I think that's going way too far. In many cases, parties, especially small parties, are challenged to recruit candidates to run for them, so introducing such a measure will contribute to discouraging many people from running for office because of the onerous registration and audit requirements. It will have the effect of putting more power in the hands of the parties who have the resources to cover the bureaucratic necessities, and take power from individuals, who may wish to compete for a party's nomination. It will lead to more parachuted candidates. I think our 19-year-old friend would have been more challenged to even consider running, given the registration and audit requirements that are now being proposed.

My attitude is, let the parties run their own affairs. They're essentially private, voluntary organizations, so it's always tricky when the government is trying to control them. The other thing, when you do that, is that it leads to what political scientists call a cartel system of parties, where the established parties reinforce their own position, and it doesn't make it possible for new, upstart parties—it's much more challenging for them to appear. So I don't think it's the business of government to interfere unduly in the activities of political parties.

Requiring nomination contestants to register with the CEO is too intrusive, in my opinion. I think candidates for party nominations ought to be free to raise and spend

as much as their parties permit. Let the parties regulate that.

I think the same should apply to leadership races. It's the party's business, not the government's business, who the leader of a party is.

I have no problem with eliminating contributions by corporations and unions. All monies should be raised from individuals or from a candidate's personal funds, subject to limits.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Mr. Wiseman, you have about two minutes.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: Thank you, sir. I think there should be a single, annual cap of contributions. In July, I suggested I didn't think \$3,000 to \$5,000 bought people off or is going to determine policy. I think \$1,000 is fine, or \$1,200. The big thing is it's a hard cap. It doesn't matter whether you give it to a candidate, the party or the constituency. I think it's okay to allow candidates to contribute \$5,000 to their own campaign.

I think if an employer pays an employee to work, that ought to be deemed a contribution by the employer.

I agree that only personal donations be permitted, and others be prohibited, under the act.

I don't think it makes much difference if the Chief Electoral Officer publishes the contribution records within two days or 10 days.

I liked OPSEU's idea of preventing those who donate to political parties from receiving government contracts, grants or tax breaks. I believe this policy exists in some American states. I'm thinking of Virginia, which Guy Giorno has pointed out.

I think that excluding polling, travel and research expenses from the spending caps is farcical. You can call almost anything you want "research," so you're not being serious about controlling expenditures.

Also, if you're going to give a subsidy based on how parties did in the last election, you might want to consider adjusting that, because it's four years from one election to another. You might want to look at recognized polls from year to year—recognized by a professional association of, let's say, market researchers—and thus adjust the amount that is given, based on where parties stand today, not where they stood four years ago.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): If you could wrap up.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: Okay. I have some other comments, but why don't we go to questions. That's fine. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Great. Thanks very much. We'll have the first round by Ms. Fife.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Wiseman, for coming in on such short notice. We definitely appreciate it. We did want to provide more time, but that was not the will of the committee.

1630

We do share your concerns around the nomination process, around creating barriers to encourage people to seek nomination. I think that this is a very legitimate concern—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Excuse me. This is a legitimate concern going forward.

The other issue that you raised is around ensuring compliance, I think. The electoral officer has raised this concern as well. There's no road map here for the electoral officer to ensure that someone who is seeking a nomination actually does register with Elections Ontario. The capacity of our local riding associations, also—already it's hard enough to get people to do those jobs at our local riding associations.

The last thing that you haven't mentioned, and I wish to give you an opportunity to do so, is that the two amendments are silent on the involvement of political staffers operating MPP fundraisers or liaising with stakeholders. They fall under very different ethical standards than we do. I mean, we have to publish our finances with the Integrity Commissioner. We're held to a higher standard. Do you have any concerns around political staffers playing this very empowered role around raising money for politicians?

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: It could be almost anybody outside of the politician. That's why I think the whole proposal is a little wild to me. Look, Mr. Hillier pointed this out: Money is going to get through in the system one way or another. It's like lubricating grease. So then, how do we control it? Well, the control has to come from spending: how much parties can spend and how much candidates can spend. It doesn't matter how much they raise if they can't spend more. It won't matter.

That's why it's vitally important that there be no loopholes, like this broad category called "research," which I think can be anything that you want to call research, or polling. In fact, when I saw that it doesn't include polling, I thought to myself, hey, do politicians run to poll their public? Don't they run because they have some principles, rather than, "Oh, I'm going to do a poll, and if people want me to vote against my principles, I will, because that's what they want." That seems to me not principled.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There is a—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you, Ms. Fife. Sorry.

Now we go to the government side. Mr. Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Professor Wiseman. Thank you very much for being here today, and for coming on short notice, and for your contribution to this committee and to public discourse, too. I just want to touch on something you said and, hopefully, if we have time, something that I know that you're a proponent of that I want to ask you about.

In terms of your advocacy for lower spending limits, here's the challenge, and I'd like your comment on this. The example of Arizona: I think we have a unique candidate who has driven earned media to new heights. The more crazy things that you say, the more people will follow you. He's doing something that's never been done before in terms of attracting people toward him because of the kinds of things that he's saying. So I'm not sure that that's a great example.

The concern that I would have about lowering spending limits is that there's a certain level of engagement that's involved in the process of notifying people of an election. If you look at a by-election, your turnout is usually around 32% or 33% or maybe lower, and in the general, 50% to 55%. I think a lot of that has to do with the money that is spent province-wide to engage the public in ideas. That gets people out. It makes them aware. It motivates them to vote.

I take what you're saying. I don't like having to spend money in my riding. But I know it costs about \$60,000 to \$80,000 to run a good campaign, to inform people, to get two or three brochures out, to get some signs up, to get an office. How do you strike that balance where you actually make sure that you're driving that vote out by letting people know? It's not just about overspending or outspending the other person; it's about actually motivating people to vote. Maybe I asked that question too long.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: That's excellent. Thank you for the question.

Well, just two points—on Arizona, it's not because we have a unique candidate; it's because Arizona is Arizona. Ottawa-Vanier is Ottawa-Vanier, so they're going to vote for a Liberal. In fact, had it not been Trump, the vote would probably be higher for the Republican candidate in Arizona.

Now, I'm very sensitive to your question, and I think it's a real concern, as a local candidate. I think the problem isn't the spending of local candidates and constituency associations. I think the problem is with the central party organizations. You need money to get flyers out there, like on-the-ground sorts of things.

The big spending problem, where we've got to put hard caps on is what the central party organizations do, which is overwhelmingly largely devolving into negative advertising. That's not good for motivating turnout, I don't think.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Mr. Wiseman, I'm sorry, we're running out of time here.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: Thank you for cutting me off.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I'm just trying to be fair to all parties.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: I agree.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you. Mr. Hillier?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you very much for being with us in committee once again, Nelson. It's always a pleasure to have you here.

Most of your comments very much mirror the concerns raised by the Chief Electoral Officer in his deputations on these amendments as well: the transparency, the broadening of the regent nominations and the nightmare that that will cause.

If I could just get your comment maybe on this one element: I was astonished that we found out on Monday that the government did not consult with the Chief Electoral Officer or have any discussion whatsoever on these amendments. I would have thought that in a brand

new, never-tried-before scenario, that would have been the first place the government would have gone to for guidance. Maybe you've got comments on if my view has merit, or if you think that it would have been inappropriate for the government to talk with the CEO.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: Well, it makes sense. Incidentally, if I can just say so because I'm a contrarian, I think that we need a Chief Electoral Officer, but some of these independent officers of Parliament are becoming too big for their britches and they're building larger and larger empires.

But with respect to the amendments that were made, when I first saw at least the media reports of them—again, I haven't seen the legal wording or anything—I thought, they're flying by the seat of their pants. Something obviously happened after that first bill was introduced, and there was outrage. And they thought, "Okay, we're going to introduce something which is totally ridiculous. We're going to get politicians not to be able to attend to their own fundraisers." And I thought, so there won't be any fundraisers.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, I think your comment about the government tying themselves up in knots on this bill is indeed a correct metaphor. They got caught abusing cash-for-access and everybody else now must pay: the nomination candidates, the leadership candidates—everybody else must pay for that abuse.

In looking at this, I've come to the belief that they're not really serious about ending cash-for-access. It's more of, let's create an appearance and a facade that something has been done.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: My view is slightly different. It's not so much that they're determined to get this cash-for-access or that access has actually influenced policy in the way you're intimating. I think the problem is, why do we need so much money in politics? Why do we need so much money being spent on these campaigns?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I agree.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I'm going to cut you off again.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: Very good. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Could I put a motion on the floor? I seek unanimous consent for a motion.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Can I finish with the deputant, please?

Thank you so much, Mr. Wiseman, for being here.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I'm sorry if we cut you off, but we're just going by the rules of the committee.

Mr. Nelson Wiseman: It's perfectly okay.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Thank you so much.

A point of order?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes, I'd like to seek unanimous consent—if Mr. Wiseman has time—that we each have a further 10 minutes' discussion with each caucus, with Mr. Wiseman.

Mr. John Fraser: We have another presenter here.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Okay. We have a motion on the floor by Mr. Hillier. He has asked for unanimous consent to extend the question-and-answer part for an additional—

Mr. Randy Hillier: For a total of 30 minutes—10 more minutes for each one.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): A total of 30 minutes. Do we have consent? I've heard a no. Thank you so much.

Having said that, I just want to remind the committee—that's the end of the deputants today—that the deadline for written submissions is 5 p.m. today; that amendments to the bill be filed with the Clerk of the Committee by 10 a.m. on Wednesday, November 9, 2016; and that the committee meet for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on Monday, November 14 and Wednesday, November 16 during its regular meeting times.

That concludes the meeting today. Adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1641.

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